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SUBJECT: USDP EDELMAN AND COUNSELOR COHEN DISCUSS
AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, RUSSIA, IRAN, GEORGIA/UKRAINE-NATO
AND IRAQI YELLOWCAKE WITH GOF

Classified By: POL M/C Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S) On January 8, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Eric Edelman, and Dr. Eliot Cohen, Counselor for the Department of State, met with Philippe Carre, Director of the Strategic Affairs bureau at the French MFA, and Michel Miraillet, Director of Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Defense. The discussion was wide-ranging and included agreement on the need for a broad policy document for Afghanistan; shared concerns over a de-stabilized situation in Pakistan; expectations of a difficult few months ahead with Russia on topics such as missile defense, Kosovo and CFE, due to their upcoming elections; and, worries over the ongoing Iranian nuclear program and provocation of U.S. naval vessels in the Straits of Hormuz. The GOF believes that NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine would cross Russian "tripwires" and the French are unwilling to pressure Greece to accept Macedonia as a new member if they haven't resolved the name dispute. Carre informed Edelman and Cohen that the GOF supports in principle the sale of yellowcake from Iraq to the French company Areva, but that technical details concerning the disposal of excess waste need to be worked out. Miraillet stated that Russia had announced that it will stop pre-notifying their missile defense launches for one year. End summary.

AFGHANISTAN: CHALLENGES AHEAD BUT FRENCH NOT "PANICKING"

12. (C) USDP Edelman provided a brief update on the December 13-14 meeting of Defense Ministers representing the countries deployed in the RC-South sector in Afghanistan and their work to prepare a "vision document" outlining a strategy and goals for the next three to five years. He emphasized that one of the goals of the document is to help Allied governments explain to their publics what is being accomplished and why it is important to remain committed to Afghanistan. Dr. Cohen noted that the Dutch commitment had been shored up last fall, thanks in part to the French agreement to deploy an OMLT in the southern sector. He stated that the Canadians are now going through a similar process of renewing their mandate in parliament, and burden-sharing by other allies will be a key issue in the debate. Carre was pleased to learn of the efforts to contribute to a more coherent NATO strategy document. He said that the French support the appointment of Paddy

Ashdown as a civilian representative in Afghanistan who can better coordinate between military and civilian reconstruction authorities and the Government of Afghanistan.

13. (C) Carre said that many of the NATO Allies had underestimated the difficulties in Afghanistan with their parliaments and publics. The GOF, on the other hand, knew that reestablishing a secure environment and a functioning Afghan government would present long-term challenges. They are not surprised by the current difficulties and neither are they "panicked." As far as France is concerned, "Afghanistan is not a war of choice, but a war of obligation." To progress, Allies need to get past the current stalemate where NATO is doing the fighting but has no policy role, and the Afghan government is unable or unwilling to engage more effectively in national reconciliation and reconstruction. The French want NATO to be more involved in policy and the Afghan forces to be more involved in security. He added that President Sarkozy's recent trip to Afghanistan was meant to demonstrate France's commitment to Afghanistan, as well as to visit French troops there. Dr. Cohen noted that the most popular institution in Afghanistan is the national army, which is a multi-ethnic, national institution with a good combat record. However, it still needs Allied troops to continue to act as advisors and partners. USDP Edelman agreed with Carre that we need a clearer understanding of the Afghan side -- how Karzai intends to achieve national reconciliation -- at the same time as we ask what Allies can contribute in the way of technical and military assistance.

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14. (C) Carre acknowledged, without being specific, that several proposals for additional French military support in Afghanistan remained under consideration. He commented that despite GOF discomfort with a "leopard-skin" presence in different parts of the country, that may turn out to be the least bad of the available options. Carre said the French wanted Allies (referring specifically to the Dutch and Canadians) to move away from the practice of committing troops for a limited period and then seeking to depart with the expectation that someone else would take over. At the MOD, Miraillet offered that the contribution of a French PRT was as yet undecided, although the French military had begun prudent planning. The French military is not trained like U.S. civil affairs units and the establishment of a French PRT will require a clearer understanding of the mission, as well as a policy shift. The MOD is also looking for a French version of PRT model as a potential solution. However, he noted that the decision ultimately rests with the President.

PAKISTAN'S DE-STABILIZING POTENTIAL

15. (C) Carre stated that the de-stabilization of Pakistan is France's immediate concern, as well as the impact of events there on neighboring Afghanistan. USDP Edelman expressed appreciation for the January 1-2 visit to Pakistan by French FM Kouchner and noted that the credibility of the upcoming elections there will be very important. Carre agreed and said that the GOF was worried about rumors of changes in governors in some of Pakistan's provinces, based on Musharraf's past history of making bad political deals to shore up support in some areas. Discussion within the MOD centered on recent efforts by the Taliban to focus on Pakistan. Miraillet was concerned over the limit of support that the Pakistan Army was willing to offer President Musharraf now that he has removed his uniform.

¶6. (C) Carre observed that USG efforts to address Russian concerns on missile defense had helped to satisfy the Russian "craving" for the return to a kind of strategic dialogue with the U.S. that they valued from the past. France, however, recognized that there was little chance that Russian positions on sensitive topics such as CFE, missile defense or Kosovo would soften until after Russian elections in the spring -- after which the GOF hoped Russia would be more "reasonable." That said, the GOF believes strongly that firm Russian red-lines remain regarding possible NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine and that we should not underestimate either the symbolism of extending an invitation to either of these countries to join a MAP or Russia's likely reaction. By its very name, a "Membership Action Plan" implies membership will be a final goal and that once extended, NATO Allies would not be able to retract it. USDP Edelman noted our well-known position and said that allies will have to determine how best to keep both Georgia and Ukraine on a track that is oriented towards Europe. On CFE, the Russians had only grudgingly met our efforts to meet their objections. Carre agreed, saying that Russia wanted to "smash" something to demonstrate their return as a world player. Miraillet noted that the Russians announced on January 2 that Moscow will stop pre-notifying their missile launches for one year. It was agreed that further discussion on this topic would be tabled until Miraillet's visit to Washington on January 14.

MISSILE DEFENSE

¶7. (S) USDP Edelman informed Carre and Miraillet that the U.S. and Russia had met in December to discuss missile defense, but the Russians had demonstrated no interest in pursuing any of our proposals, including that of phased

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activation based on benchmarks of demonstrated ballistic missile capability. The Iranian Ashura missile test on December 20 showed that they are technologically more capable than Russia is willing to acknowledge. Russia did appear more willing to discuss confidence-building measures and means of monitoring and verification. USDP Edelman also cited progress in the ongoing MD discussions with the Czech Republic and Poland. Negotiations with the Czech Republic were proceeding on technical issues and we hope to complete the discussions in February or March. Negotiations with Poland had lagged due to their elections and establishment of a new government. Edelman acknowledged that our relations with Russia would be affected by Russian internal politics and polemics until their March elections and until Putin's role is determined.

NATO ENLARGEMENT

¶8. (C) USDP Edelman stated that of the "Adriatic 3" candidates for NATO membership, Croatia appeared to be in good position, while Albania was still battling corruption and rule of law issues and Macedonia is hampered by the name dispute with Greece. We had encouraged both latter governments to do all they could to meet the requirements for an invitation to join by the time of Bucharest. Carre said that France would not push Greece to accept Macedonia as a member without resolving the name issue, although they would recommend moderation. He added that Macedonia is vastly underestimating the problem that the name issue could pose, as they continue to believe "the U.S. will sell their membership in NATO to the other Allies." If Macedonia is not invited to become a member, an invitation

to Albania becomes iffy. The U.S. delegation informed Carre that the USG had informed Macedonian officials very frankly that Skopje was responsible for resolving the name dispute with Greece.

IRAN: PROVOCATIONS

19. (S) USDP Edelman shared the basic details of the January 7 incident in the Straits of Hormuz when five small boats operated by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard engaged in provocative behavior and radio transmissions towards three U.S. naval vessels in international waters. The U.S. Navy had exercised restraint, but it had an obligation to defend our ships and could not allow the Iranians to push the envelope. Carre appreciated USG caution in this case and observed that Iran feels strengthened following publication of the NIE. Iran's missile program is a source of particular concern. For its part, Iran feels that it must get through this year with its nuclear program on track, waiting out the end of the Administration. Iran has its own elections coming in March, so they are likely to be more difficult and less accommodating in the short-term, but at the same time they don't want a big problem with the USG that might upset their nuclear program before the advent of a new U.S. administration. France is pushing for a quick resolution at the UN Security Council, before the end of the month, even if it is a weak text. Better a quick, weak resolution than a delayed resolution that is likely to be at least as weak or even weaker. USDP Edelman stated that the international community needs to find other levers to change Iranian behavior. The best lever we have is the restrictions we have introduced on Iran's ability to exploit the international financial system for its own illegal purposes. In a similar discussion at the MOD, Miraillet added that the French have noted that financial pressure is effective on Iran. He opined that it might be useful for the U.S. to invite the French Ambassador in Iran to come to Washington to hear his views. USDP Edelman stated that taking further action in the financial area could not be done by the USG alone, but would have to be undertaken jointly with our allies. Carre noted that the next meeting of EU Foreign Ministers is scheduled to discuss this issue, including expanding the list of

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entities which blocked from access to the banking system. The upcoming visits of the U.S. and French presidents to the Gulf region should also be used to shore up support for this policy in those countries.

SALE OF IRAQI YELLOWCAKE

10. (S) Finally, USDP Edelman inquired about the GOF position regarding the possible sale of Iraqi yellowcake to the French company Areva. The USG and the Iraqi government were anxious to get the yellowcake out of the country and we understood that Areva is a potential buyer. Carre confirmed that the French government supports the sale, and has made that known to Areva, but that technical details would have to be worked out, as some of the yellowcake to be sold will not be useable and French law would not allow it to be imported to and stored in France. The GOF hopes, therefore, that the U.S. or another country would be able to accept this waste. That said, Carre emphasized, the French government had "given a green light" to the sale.

LEBANON AND CHINA

¶11. (S) USDP Edelman informed Miraillet that the U.S. desires to make the Lebanese Armed Forces a smaller, more credible, military force. The U.S. has been seeking a bilateral defense agreement with Lebanon since November 2007, pending the outcome of a Lebanese Presidential election.

¶12. (S) USDP Edelman stated in the meetings with both Carre and Miraillet that the U.S. was interested in opening a dialogue and exchange of information on Chinese interests in Africa and South America. The U.S. is growing concerned over what have been noted as haphazard Chinese investments on both continents. Miraillet was very receptive to this suggestion, noting that the French had similar concerns and an open exchange would be very beneficial.

¶13. (U) USDP Edelman and C staff have reviewed and cleared this cable.

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